

Sudan – South Sudan Relations Analysis: February 20, 2013 – March 18, 2013

Oil Agreements: Seeds of Conflict or Cooperation

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On March 12, 2013, delegates from Sudan and South Sudan met in the Ethiopian capital and concluded one of the most promising deals since last year. Notable arrangements were made regarding the resumption of oil production and transport, as well as demilitarization of the border buffer zone.¹ It is unclear how this new agreement relates to the recent developments of South Sudan's construction of another channel of oil export, but South Sudan's plans for a new pipeline through Ethiopia are undeniably important.

Since the partition of South Sudan in 2011, cooperation over oil production and transport between Sudan and South Sudan has been the main source for possible normalization of what has been a generally strained relationship. Conflict over oil was a major reason for the decline in relations in January of 2012. However, the two nations managed to move beyond those hostilities with the landmark agreement on September 27, 2012. With this history in mind, the recent South Sudanese efforts to construct an oil pipeline from the Upper Nile state to the Ethiopian coast have the potential to escalate hostilities directly over oil once again.² The last month has seen a significant escalation in border clashes that climaxed with SAF helicopter bombing in the Upper Nile region.³ If Sudan feels its grip on revenue from its former resources is slipping it may feel inclined to escalate hostilities toward its Southern neighbour.

While the most recent agreement certainly brightens hopes for a more normalized business and border relations between Sudan and South Sudan, tensions remain high and the rhetorical conflict continues. While Sudan claims to have completed its agreed upon buffer zone troop withdrawal, South Sudan has asserted that its northern neighbour has conversely attacked South Sudanese civilians in the Northern Bahr el Ghazal State.⁴

While this new oil and border agreement is promising, future Sudan and South Sudan relations will undeniably rely on greater levels of trust and cost benefit analysis. With the possibility for violence in the Upper Nile State increased by South Sudan's alternative pipeline plans, the dynamics between Sudan and South Sudan remain as complicated as ever. Sudan will need to consider the costs of economic cooperation and/or

¹ (The Sudan Tribune, independent, non profit online news, Paris, article dated 12 March 2013, in English) South Sudan may soon resume oil exports through Sudan.

(The Sudan Tribune, independent, non profit online news, Paris, article dated 17 March 2013, in English) Sudan says it completed troop pullout from buffer zone.

² (The Daily Monitor, independent and private news source, Uganda, article dated 4 March 2013, in English) South Sudan to export crude oil by road through Ethiopia.

³ (The Sudan Tribune, independent, non-profit online news, Paris, article dated 15 February 2013, in English) South Sudan Accuses Khartoum of Fresh Bombardments in Unity State.

⁴ (The Sudan Tribune, independent, non profit online news, Paris, article dated 18 March 2013, in English) South accuses Sudan of launching attack despite border agreement.

continued hostility with the South, and South Sudan will need to balance its provocative oil endeavors with its efforts for deeper cooperation with Sudan.